

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Claudia Flores, and I am a professor at Yale Law School, where I am Director of the International Human Rights Clinic. I am an expert in international human rights, and my research focuses on issues of inequality and good governance. Prior to joining academia, I served as a United Nations (UN) legal advisor to the governments of East Timor and Zimbabwe, aiding their constitutional drafting processes. I have also served as a gender and constitution expert to UN Women and the UN Development Program.

I write to communicate my strong support of HB 6616 (“An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status”). Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring the human rights of Connecticut residents are respected, vindicated, and enjoyed.

The right to health has been recognized as a human right decades ago in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.¹ The right to health contains both freedoms and entitlements, such as timely access to critical health services. A key principle of human rights is non-discrimination in accessing the right to health. Currently, teenagers and young adults in Connecticut are discriminated against in the healthcare arena based on where they were born. I believe this legislation will greatly reduce such discrimination.

Undocumented persons here and abroad often experience incredibly precocious working and housing conditions, facing interlocking barriers to their right to health beyond being inadequately covered by state health care systems; undocumented persons often are fearful that medical professionals may report them to immigration authorities, they are particularly vulnerable to workplace sexual abuse and violence, and have difficulty accessing health information due to language barriers, among other reasons.² As some of the most vulnerable persons within a population, it becomes even more urgent to combat the current status quo which denies undocumented persons their human right to medical care. Further, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stress the importance of respecting the rights of non-citizens to “an adequate standard of physical and mental health by, inter alia, refraining from denying or limiting their access to preventative, curative and palliative health services.”³

Connecticut should take this major step in respecting the human right of undocumented children and young adults to access the critical care they need to live and thrive. I strongly support HB 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation.

¹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 12, Dec. 16, 1966.

² See WORLD HEALTH ORG., *International Migration, Health and Human Rights, Health & Human Rights Publication Series*, No. 4 (Dec. 2003), <http://www.who.int>; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and International Organization for Migration, *Migrants' Right to Health*, UNAIDS Best Practice Collection (Geneva, 2001).

³ WORLD HEALTH ORG., *The Right to Health* at 20 (last visited Feb. 13, 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Claudia Flores, J.D.